

Ways to Keep in Touch with Your Child

How smoothly your reunion with your child will go depends largely on how involved you stay in their lives during the deployment. Children need to know that they are important to you no matter where you happen to be. Below you will find a list of ways to help you keep a strong connection with your children.

When communicating with your children during deployment, keep in mind that it is important to send things to each child individually. They need to know you care about them not only as "the kids," but as individuals as well.



Share with your child WHY you must be away from them. Tell them about your job, explaining any military words that you may use. Let them know what parts of your job you like, as well as the more challenging areas.



Keep up with the skills your child is working on (Scout badges, musical instruments, crafts, foreign languages, sports, etc.). Ask about their progress regularly and keep track so you don't always ask the same question.

Ask your child to write to you reviewing new movies, videos, TV shows, video games, etc. Ask him to keep you up to date on how your favorite sports are doing by writing about them or sending newspaper clippings. Make plans to enjoy some of these things together when you return.



Keep a copy of your child's schedule for sports events, school programs, field trips, or other special events. That will give you things to talk or ask about in your letters, email, or phone calls.



Send letters or cards celebrating occasions you may not usually note like St. Patrick's Day, First Day of Summer, Flag Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, President's Day, or April Fool's Day. You can also celebrate events like the last day of school, learning to swim, surviving summer camp, passing a test, first home run, first school dance, losing a tooth, learning to ride a bike, first trip to the zoo, etc. Be creative!



Tell your child often, "I love you" and "I miss you."

Start making plans for home-coming early. Ask your child to gather information about inexpensive things to do as a family and things that the two of you can do together.



SECRET CODE

Develop a code that you and your child can use to write letters to each other. This will make letter writing fun and different.

If your schedule changes, inform your child yourself by mail or phone call. That way he learns he can depend on you for information, and the parent at home doesn't have to try to answer questions about the situation.



Create a fill-in-the-blank letter for your child to complete and send to you. Use some "yes" and "no" questions and some that require a little thought. This is a great way to learn more about your child and keep the connection strong. Older kids may want to create these letters for you to complete as well!



Have handy a list of questions or things to talk about when you phone your child from overseas. Keep notes so you don't ask the same questions with every phone call.



Correspond with your child's class. Tell them about life at sea (not just the "fun" stuff), foreign cultures, language, food, sights, etc. Send them stamps, coins, newspapers, etc., especially if it relates to any places they may be studying. When you return, visit the class for "Show & Tell" (in uniform). Share your experiences and answer their questions.



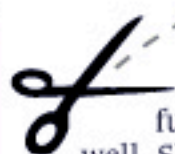
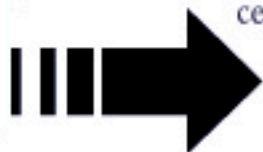
Send things to your child from different countries you visit such as gum, candy, stickers, placemats, etc. Things that kids like at home, they love when you've sent them from a foreign country! Seeing their favorite candy wrapper in Spanish is a thrill!



Older kids might like to see newspapers, magazines, or books from the countries you visit.



Give "atta boy" for extra help they've given, special accomplishments, or progress made in school or other areas. Mention it in your letters and phone calls. You can also send a certificate that you've made on the computer or, better yet, one that you've drawn yourself!



Swap jokes with your child and ask them to collect jokes or funny stories or e-mails for you as well. Share them in your letters or over the phone. Even small kids love "knock-knock" jokes!

Create a crossword puzzle or word search page using a list of the things you miss about your child.



Send pictures of you on the ship, at different locations in foreign ports, and with your buddies. Ask them to do the same.

Be sure your child knows how often to expect to receive mail, phone calls, and email from you



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OF HARPEN ROAD

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If you have an audio or video tape recorder, record messages to send to your child or read her a story (from a favorite book or make one up). Ask her to record messages to you as well.